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# NATIONAL NARRATIVES AND THEIR 'OTHERS': ETHNICITY, CLASS, RELIGION AND THE GENDERING OF NATIONAL HISTORIES

Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz

"The past is not only just a legacy: it is also a project"

Arif Dirlik

I: INTRODUCTION. THE ORIGINS OF THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION IN NATIONAL HISTORY: SOME PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS ABOUT TIME, THE NATION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY (INCLUDING NHIST).

'The owl of Minerva only flies out at dusk', according to a famous saying of Hegel, and the same seems to hold true for Clio's owl – at least in theory. Historians from the early nineteenth century onwards have emphasised that a distance in time is the necessary condition for any form of 'scientific' history writing, thereby reversing the previous preference of historians as contemporary eyewitnesses. This Hegelian conviction became so well entrenched in the historical profession that history and distance in time almost became synonymous during the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup>. According to the new professional orthodoxy, 'hot' history needed to cool down first before it could be 'scientifically' processed by historians. Interested 'partisanship' – religious, political or otherwise – needed time in order to disappear and to give way to supra-partisan 'objectivity'. Moreover, the long-term effects of events had to be observed in order to be able to judge their causes and origins. Distance in time thus became the supreme virtue of the 'scientific' historian.

It is only recently that the 'constructed character' of all these temporal ideas and markers has been recognised - and this 'discovery' remarkably only took place after the 'discovery' of the 'spatial turn', that is after the discovery of the constructed character of all spatial markers. So maybe – *mirabile dictu* – after having lived through the 'linguistic', the 'cultural', the 'spatial' and the 'visual' turns, historians may now be facing their final turn: the 'temporal turn', thus implying that historians 'denaturalise' their temporal notions and will justify them in the form of arguments. As Mark Phillips recently formulated:

Every form of historical representation must position its audience in some relationship of closeness to or distance from the events and experiences it describes [...]. But if the problem of establishing distance can be said to be an unavoidable feature of historical representation, it certainly does not follow that there exists a universally privileged distance location. On the contrary, it is essential to recognise that there is no fixed stance, either in detachment or proximity, that is best suited for all contexts, purposes, or genres [...]. It includes political as well as emotional engagement (or disengagement) and is the consequence of cognitive choices as well as formal and aesthetic ones<sup>2</sup>.

Francois Hartog only recently baptised the 'temporal turn' with the introduction of the term 'regime of historicity', elaborating on Koselleck's well-known analysis of the changing modes of experiencing the past since the eighteenth century:

The regime of historicity [...] could be understood in two ways. In a restricted sense, as the way in which a society considers its past and deals with it. In a broader sense, the 'regime of historicity' designates the 'method of self-awareness in a human community'. How, in the words of Lévi-Strauss, it 'reacts' to a 'degree of historicity' which is identical for all societies. More precisely, the concept provides an instrument for comparing different types of history, but also and even primarily, I would now add, highlights methods of relating to time: forms of experiencing time, here and elsewhere, today and yesterday. Ways of being in time<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See, M. Phillips, 'Distance and Historical Representation', in *History Workshop Journal*, 57, (2004): 123-141, 125.

<sup>2</sup> M. Phillips, 'History, Memory and Historical Distance', in P. Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness*, (Toronto, 2004), 86-109, 95. See further, B. Taylor, 'Introduction: How far, how near: distance and proximity in the historical imagination', *History Workshop Journal*, 57, (2004): 117-122.

<sup>3</sup> F. Hartog, *Régimes d'Historicité. Présentisme et Expériences du Temps*, (Paris, 2003); F. Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', *Museum International*, 57, 227, (2005): 7-18, 8. See also, R. Koselleck, 'Historia Magistra Vitae: The Dissolution of the Topos into the Perspective of a Modernized Historical Process', in R. Koselleck (ed.), *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical*

However this may be, the astonishing growth of interest in 'the nation' among historians since 1989 undoubtedly is connected to time because this interest is directly related to the Europeans experiencing the nation state's final dawn after the unexpected come back of the nation in East-Central Europe immediately after the fall of the wall<sup>4</sup>. Since 1989, an economically and politically United Europe appears to be the Europeans' inescapable historical destiny – or it is at least represented as such by the political classes all over Europe. Historians are stimulated by the same political classes to write 'European' histories – meaning histories in which the individual national histories eventually appear as the 'historically necessary' tombstones along the way to History's 'Final Destination': the general 'state of the nation states' alias 'United Europe'. In this respect, many of Europe's 'scientific' historians still are Hegelians, without being conscious of it.

So the substantial acceleration of European integration after 1989 has not only problematised the traditional temporal markers and ideas of professional history in Europe, but also its spatial markers and ideas. Since 'the nation' – the formerly quasi-natural spatial unit of the bulk of professional history – has turned into a problem in Western-European historiography while simultaneously turning into a 'solution' in much of Central-eastern historiography, historians have been forced to reflect on their temporal and spatial units of analysis. This has been most visible in the discussions how to periodise contemporary history after the Cold War came to an unexpected end (consider Eric Hobsbawm's influential proposal for a 'short' 20<sup>th</sup> century between 1914 and 1990), and in the discussions in which spatial entity/ties should replace 'the nation' in history (including the debates about 'the canon' in history education)<sup>5</sup>. The circumstances in which similar discussions have been rampant in 'global', 'world' and 'transnational' history have certainly added momentum to this historiographical process we could call the 'decentring of the nation state'<sup>6</sup>.

The increasing interest since 1989 in the nation *an sich*, and its *für sich* form of the nation state, has its own historiographical irony, as national history had already been declared dead a couple of times in the twentieth century by historians, beginning in the aftermath of the First World War. This occurred after being regarded as history's 'natural entity' for much of the nineteenth century. This dominant nation state oriented nineteenth century view of history could also be called 'Hegelian', because Hegel presented the state as the objective and conscious (*für sich*) institutional embodiment of the 'spirit' of a *Volk* alias a nation – of a *Volksgeist* – just like Herder had done before him. The Historical School of Leopold von Ranke adopted Hegel's view that history, understood exclusively as European history, was essentially *political* history, and in the second half of the nineteenth century, his heirs increasingly identified political history with the history of nation states<sup>7</sup>.

This identification appeared almost 'natural', while history was professionalising and attaching itself to the nation state both institutionally and financially from the nineteenth century onwards. Both the state elites and the majority of the professional historians presupposed that education in (national) history was essential for 'nation building' and for 'responsible' citizenship. This meant that the practical function of history was now conceived of as *indirect*, through individual and collective identity formation, rather than as *direct*, through *exempla*, as had been the case under the 'classical' regime of historicity.

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*Time*, (Cambridge (Mass.) 1985), 21-38. For a critique of Koselleck's ideas, see A. Eppe, 'Natura Magistra Historiae? Reinhart Kosellecks transzendente Historik', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 32, (2006): 201-213.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the classical texts of nationalism studies, including Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm's influential books, were published in the 1980s, but it is still true to say that interest in this area grew exponentially after 1989. In addition some areas of Europe saw blatantly nationalist histories aiming to establish anew or strengthen national(ist) master narratives, which is entirely different from the scholarly books of nationalisms published during the 1980s.

<sup>5</sup> See M. Grever, 'Nationale identiteit en historisch besef. De risico's van een canon in de postmoderne samenleving', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 119, 2, (2006): 160-178

<sup>6</sup> It is not accidental that these discussions have been most intense in the parts of Europe most effected by '1989', such as Germany. See A. Nützenadel and W. Schieder (eds.), *Zeitgeschichte als Problem. Nationale Traditionen und Perspektiven der Forschung in Europa (Sonderheft Geschichte und Gesellschaft)*, (Göttingen, 2004); Martin Sabrow a.o (eds.), *Zeitgeschichte als Streitgeschichte. Grosse Kontroversen seit 1945*, (München, 2003); *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, (23 December, 2002), (B 51-52/2002); *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, (3 January, 2005) (1-2/2005), Theme 'Contemporary History'; U. Herbert, 'Nach den Katastrophen. Entwicklungsstand und Perspektiven der deutschen Zeitgeschichtsforschung', (<http://www.lwl.org/LWL/Kultur/WIR/1082446255/index2.html>); U. Frevert and D. Blackbourn, 'Europeanizing German history', in *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, Washington D. C.* 36, (2005): 9–33. For the discussions in global history, see the overview by Patrick O'Brien, 'Historiographical traditions and modern imperatives for the restoration of global history', in *Journal of Global History*, 1, (2006):3-39.; and A. Dirlik, 'Performing the world: reality and representation in the making of world history(ies)', in *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, Washington D.C.* 37 (2005): 9-27.

<sup>7</sup> See T. N. Baker, 'National History in the Age of Michelet, Macaulay, and Bancroft', in L. Kramer and S. Mah (eds.), *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, (Oxford, 2002), 185-201.

The recent crisis in 'nation building' in most West-European societies, manifesting itself in the presence of 'unintegrated' (mainly Muslim) immigrants and their descendants, has shown that little has changed in the dominant ideas about the practical functions of history education since the early nineteenth century. *More and better* history education (the canon!) should help to integrate those in 'the nation' who, as yet, seem to refuse to do so. Similar approaches could be observed after the rejection of the new European constitution by the French and the Dutch electorate: more and better 'European' history education should teach Europe's citizens how to cast their vote next time. The Dutch government explained the rejection on the basis of 'lack of information' and has ordered new investigations that should clarify the causes of this unexpected 'gap' between the majority of the Dutch citizens and 'Europe'. So, although national history has been proclaimed 'dead' several times since the nineteenth century, the belief in the salutary practical effects of national history education has not.

Both Koselleck and Hartog have argued that the 'classical' regime of historicity, captured by Cicero's formula *historia magistra vitae*, has given way to the 'modern' regime of historicity from the late eighteenth century onwards. Instead of the past being authoritative for the present, in the form of practical *exempla*, after the French Revolution the future became the point of practical orientation – in the form of a *telos* in the making, especially 'the nation' (and later for some 'the classless society'). This change of the regimes of historicity implied a remarkable and fundamental change in the relationship between the three dimensions of time: past, present and future. As far as the 'lessons of history' under the 'modern' regime of historicity are concerned, Hartog has argued, "If there is any lesson, it comes, so to speak, from the future, no longer from the past."<sup>8</sup> It would take the two World Wars and the Holocaust before this identification of History with the progressive development of nation states turned into a serious problem due to the catastrophic events during the first half of the twentieth century. The answer to the question 'what kind of history will supplant national history?' was not, however, provided.

Some students of historiography, like Pierre Nora, locate the first cracks in the 'modern' regime of historicity in the 1930s, others, like Francois Hartog, locate its end more precisely in '1989'. Both regard the 'memory boom' and the 'heritage boom' of the last two decades – the sudden replacement of 'history' by 'memory' and 'heritage' or 'patrimony' – as a clear sign that our relationship to the past in Europe has changed fundamentally. Both argue that this change means that the 'modern' regime of historicity has yielded to a new regime, baptised by Hartog as the 'presentist' regime of historicity beginning in '1989' and circumscribed as follows:

*Historia magistra* presented history, or supposedly did so, from the point of view of the past. On the contrary, in the modern regime, history was written, teleologically, from the point of view of the future. Presentism implies that the point of view is explicitly and only that of the present<sup>9</sup>.

Because both also argue that this change from the 'modern' to the 'presentist' regime of historicity is connected to the demise of the nation state, and with the position of national history as such, we will have a look at their arguments in turn. Since Nora argues that the decline of the nation in history writing and the rise of historiographical reflection are directly related, we will need to address his argument too. Jay Winter's notion of memory, having taken the place in historical studies formerly held by the notions of race, class and gender, is an additional incentive to reflect on the history – memory issue in this introduction<sup>10</sup>. Since Hartog builds on Nora's line of argument, we shall address the latter first.

In the tradition of Maurice Halbwachs, Nora regards history and memory as opposites:

Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. [...] Memory is blind to all but the group it binds – which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific: collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence it claims

<sup>8</sup> F. Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History: the Order of Time', in R. Thorstendahl and I. Veit-Brause (eds.), *History – Making. The Intellectual and Social Formation of a Discipline*, (Stockholm, 1996), 85-113, 97.

<sup>9</sup> Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History', 109.

<sup>10</sup> J. Winter, 'The generation of memory: reflections on the "memory boom" in contemporary historical studies', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute Washington D.C.*, 27, (2006): 69-92

universal authority [...] at the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it<sup>11</sup>.

Patrick Hutton describes Halbwachs distinction of memory and history in a similar way: “Memory evokes the presence of the past, history keeps distance from it. Most important, memory distorts the past, whereas the historian’s obligation is to correct memory’s inaccuracies”<sup>12</sup>. According to Nora, this opposition between memory and history went unnoticed as long as history was predominantly *national* history; that is as long as the communities carrying memory and history *coincided* in ‘the nation’. Characteristic for this temporary ‘symbiosis’ of history and memory beginning in the nineteenth century was “a tone of national responsibility assigned to the historian – half preacher, half soldier. [...] The holy nation thus acquired a holy history: through the nation; our memory continued to rest upon a sacred foundation”<sup>13</sup>.

Hutton develops a similar argument centred on the intimate relationship between the focus on the nation and nineteenth century historicism:

Historicists tended to emphasise the interplay between memory and history. From Jules Michelet in the early nineteenth century to R.G. Collingwood in the early twentieth, collective memory, construed as the living imagination of the historical actors of the past, was perceived to be the subject matter of historical understanding. Often sympathising with the political traditions they studied, particularly that vaunted the nation state as an instrument of progress, historicists regarded history as an evocation of memory’s insights. They studied history so as to recreate in the present the past as it had originally been imagined. In evoking the images in which the world was once conceived, they taught, historians could re-enter that mental universe and so recover the presence of those times. The relationship between memory and history was fluid and uncomplicated<sup>14</sup>.

The historians’ task was to construct a continuous storyline between the nation’s holy origins and the present state of the nation: “in the teleological perspective of the nation the political, the military, the biographical, and the diplomatic all were to be considered pillars of continuity”, all adding their details to “the monumental edifice that was the nation”. In France, it was only in the crisis of the 1930s that, according to Nora:

The coupling of state and nation was gradually replaced by the coupling of state and society and history became ‘the self-knowledge of society.’ This ‘uncoupling’ of history and the nation meant that (national) history ‘also abandoned its claim to bearing coherent meaning and consequently lost its pedagogical authority to transmit values. ... No longer a cause, the nation has become a given. ...history is now a social science, memory a purely private phenomenon. ... The memory-nation was thus the last incarnation of the unification of history and memory’<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> P. Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: les Lieux de Memoire’, in *Representations*, 26, (1989), 7-25, 8-9. For general overviews of the field of memory studies, see: A. Assmann, ‘History and Memory’, in N. Smelser and P. Baltus (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 10, (Oxford 2001), 6822–6829; W. Kansteiner, ‘Finding meaning in memory. A methodological critique of collective memory studies’, in *History and Theory*, 41, 2 (2002): 179-198; K. L. Klein, ‘On the emergence of memory in historical discourse’, in *Representations*, 69, (2000): 127-150.

<sup>12</sup> P. Hutton, ‘Recent Scholarship on Memory and History’, in *The History Teacher*, 33, 4, (2000): 533-548, 538.

<sup>13</sup> Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Hutton, ‘Recent Scholarship on Memory and History’, 535.

<sup>15</sup> Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 11. Although this is not the place to go into the notion of ‘site of memory’, a minimal clarification is needed in order to understand its meaning. Nora ‘defines’ *lieux de mémoire* enigmatically “as simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration.” (18) They are *lieux* – sites – in three senses: material, symbolic, and functional. “Even an apparently purely material site, like an archive, becomes a *lieu de mémoire* only if the imagination invests it with it a symbolic aura. A purely functional site, like a class room manual, a testament, or a veterans’ reunion belongs to the category only in as much it is the object of a ritual. And the observance of a commemorative minute of silence, an extreme example of a strictly symbolic action, serves as a concentrated appeal to memory by literally breaking a temporal continuity. Moreover, the three aspects always coexist.” (19). Nora also explains that a site of memory always implies, first “a will to remember,” (19) secondly, “a site”, because “memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events” (22), and, thirdly, “materiality” – further refined into “portable sites” (e.g. tablets of law), “topographical sites” (e.g. national archives), and “monumental memory-sites” (e.g. statues to the dead) (22). The functional aspect ranges from “those dedicated to preserving an incommunicable experience that would disappear along with those who shared it – such as the veterans associations – to those whose purpose is pedagogical” like manuals and dictionaries (23). The symbolic aspect is exemplified by the opposition between “dominant and dominated *lieux de mémoire*” – imposed by the state or an established interest – versus ‘spontaneously’ generated – that is ‘from below’. Sites of

Therefore, according to Nora, history does not supply groups with an identity, only memory does, and 'historical identity' only existed as long as (national) history coincided with (national) memory. We will argue from a fundamentally different position below, because we use a different, multi-dimensional notion of 'historical identity' recognising other 'codes of difference' in historiography next to the 'code of nationality'. Within these 'codes', Team 2 of the NHIST programme focuses on religion, ethnicity, class and gender. Each can function and have functioned as collective identity markers in history next to the national one, because Team 3 and Team 4 deal with the spatial alternatives to the nation. Typically, Nora treats the nation as the only historiographical relevant 'code of difference' and he thus remains embedded in the very historiographical tradition he sets out to analyse.

After history and the 'memory-nation' parted company, according to Nora, memory resurfaced in its plural form of the *lieux de mémoire*, once tied to *milieux de mémoire* but now disappearing: "There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of history"<sup>16</sup>. Hutton argues that, in Nora's scheme, the relationship between history and memory is reversed after the disintegration of the 'memory nation' (i.e. the master narrative of the nation). Since then history is lacking its backbone and is disintegrating:

The grand narrative of modern French history is broken up into particular narratives, each relocated at a different site of memory. These places of memory are only loosely connected, if at all. Memories are unbound from their fixed places in a grand narrative to become simultaneous reference points for historians reconstructing their cultural heritage [...] History becomes an art of locating these memories<sup>17</sup>.

Again, in Nora's eyes, 'the nation' is the only possible 'master narrative' in historiography: after 'the nation' is no more, its only alternative is 'fragmentation'. This view is not restricted to conservative thinkers in France<sup>18</sup>.

What we confront in Halbwachs, Nora and Hartog's thinking is a *spatial* conception of historical time. According to this view, the past and the present exist simultaneously: "Places of memory inspire creative thinking about history. In that sense, memory makes the past live again."<sup>19</sup> This spatial conception of historical time contrasts with the *temporal* conception of historical time as developed by Sigmund Freud, who affirmed the power of the existential reality of the past in the present:

We cannot escape our past, for it continues to influence our present mental processes. Memories we would put away as too painful to face haunt us ceaselessly in our unconscious minds. We try to forget the past; we may cover it over with more benign and tolerable screen memories. But the unrequited prompting of the past cripples our reckoning with the present. We have no choice but to remember that past. Only by working through repressed memory will we be empowered to liberate ourselves from it<sup>20</sup>.

This difference in conceptions of historical time is important to keep in mind (although in Hartog we will confront a mix of both conceptions because he also recognises the existential reality of the past and a 'return of the repressed').

Just like the conservative German philosophers of history Joachim Ritter, Odo Marquard and Hermann Lübbe, Nora posits a direct link between the 'acceleration of change' in modern nineteenth and twentieth century history resulting in the erosion of tradition or 'living memory', and the rise of 'cold' 'scientific' history as a 'compensation' for 'lost memory'<sup>21</sup>. Cold 'scientific' history, by criticising 'living' national tradition, is undermining it but offers nothing – except itself – in return. Consequently, Nora diagnoses the rise of the history of *historiography* – of history making *itself* into its own object – as a consequence of its 'splitting off' from its 'natural' *milieu de mémoire* of the

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memory – contrary to historical objects 'have no referent in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs' which does not mean that they have no 'physical presence.' (23).

<sup>16</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 7.

<sup>17</sup> Hutton, 'Recent Scholarship on Memory and History', 538-9.

<sup>18</sup> For a comparison with the US, see: A. Megill, 'Fragmentation and the future of historiography', in *American Historical Review*, 96, 3, (1991): 693-698.

<sup>19</sup> Hutton, 'Recent Scholarship on Memory and History', 539. On the spatial conception of time, see also K. E. Till, *The New Berlin. Memory, Politics, Place* (Minnesota, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Hutton, 'Recent Scholarship on Memory and History', 539-40.

<sup>21</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 7, 18.

'memory-nation'. He notes, "Perhaps the most tangible sign of the split between history and memory has been the emergence of a history of history, the awakening, quite recently in France, of a historiographical consciousness". In a Nietzschean vein, Nora is critical of this 'split' of history from 'living memory' – what Nietzsche calls 'life' – by turning towards itself: "By questioning its own traditional structure, its own conceptual and material resources, its operating procedures and social means of distribution, the entire discipline of history has entered its historiographical age, consummating its dissociation from memory – which in turn has become a possible object of history". Therefore, Nora likens practicing historiography with "running a knife between the tree of memory and the bark of history"<sup>22</sup>. After successfully having performed this act, history, however, has cut both itself and memory off from their roots 'in life' – read the nation – and thus is left without a practical basis and without a practical goal. History, after cutting itself loose from the 'memory-nation' in its historiographical, or 'epistemological', stage, could only transform itself and the history of memory into its new objects of investigation. The result of this development is the (self-reflexive) study of historiography – the NHIST programme represents a fine example of what Nora had in mind – and the 'memory boom' we have experienced for more than two decades<sup>23</sup>.

Moreover, what is this 'buzz' about memory? Characteristic of the present memory boom, according to Nora, is "the obsession with the archive that marks our age, attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past", visible in the explosive development of archives, museums and monuments – including archives consisting of recorded oral testimonies. He continues by noting, "Fear of a rapid and final disappearance combines with anxiety about the meaning of the present and uncertainty about the future to give even the most humble testimony, the most modest vestige, the potential dignity of the memorable". As the real *milieux de mémoire* have dissolved – and with them 'true' memories in Nora's view – *everything* is archived. Therefore, 'modern archive-memory' is "not memory but already history. What we take to be flare-ups of memory are in fact its final consumption in the flames of history [...]. Its new vocation is to record: delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering, it sheds its signs upon depositing there, as a snake sheds its skin"<sup>24</sup>.

The recent trend for 'heritage' and 'patrimony' is interpreted by Hartog as a symptom of the same 'presentist' regime of historicity; not knowing what to preserve one tries to preserve almost everything<sup>25</sup>. The result of the displacement of traditional memory by 'archive-memory' is paradoxical: by storing the traces of the present indiscriminately, it becomes progressively unclear what they are traces of<sup>26</sup>.

Since the nation and its origins no longer confer a unity and a continuity to the past, nor a *telos* in the future, history under the 'presentist' regime of historicity tends towards *discontinuity*, according to Nora. In fact, he argues that the relationship between the present and the past, and the relationship between the present and the future, show a structural similarity. When the relationship between the present and the past gets blurred so does the relationship between the present and the future. When the continuity of history dissolves and discontinuity takes over, continuity dissolves in *both* temporal directions:

Progress and decadence, the two great themes of historical intelligibility at least since modern times, both aptly express this cult of continuity, the confident assumption of knowing to whom and to what we owe our existence – whence the importance of the idea of 'origins', an already profane version of the mythological narrative, but one that contributed to giving meaning and a sense of the sacred to a society engaged in a nationwide process of secularization. The greater the origins, the more they magnified our greatness. Through the past we venerated above all ourselves. It is this relation which has been broken.

<sup>22</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 10.

<sup>23</sup> Next to Nora's political explanation, Jay Winter also offers, first, an 'economic' explanation, secondly, a family-centred explanation, and thirdly, a 'disciplinary' explanation for the 'memory boom'. Next to the impulse of 'public commemoration' related to the nation state, especially related to the Holocaust and World War II and to 'identity politics', Winter mentions the enormous expansion of higher education and ever growing affluence as 'impulses', because they produced the economic market for the 'memory boom' and thus conditioned the longing for 'heritage' and 'patrimony': "Affluence has helped turn identity into a commodity, to be consumed by everyone during their (increasingly ample) leisure time" (6). He quotes Alan Milward approvingly: "The media are the hypermarket outlet for the consumption of memory [...] The history of memory represents that stage of consumption in which the latest product, ego-history, is the image of the self not only marketed but also consumed by the self". According to his family-centred explanation, the notion of 'memory' enabled the generation dominant from the 1980's onwards to connect to the generation of their grandparents (read World War I) through the generation of their parents (read World War II). According to the disciplinary explanation the 'memory boom' both represented and enabled the 'cultural turn' in history after the earlier 'social scientific' turn had failed to deliver the goods. See Winter, 'The generation of memory'.

<sup>24</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 13.

<sup>25</sup> See Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 12-14

<sup>26</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 14.

Nora implies this occurs simultaneously with the dissolution of the memory-nation<sup>27</sup>. Instead of the search for identity in the continuity between 'us' and our 'forefathers', which characterised the 'modern' regime of historicity according to Nora, the search for alterity in the discontinuity between the present and the past is characteristic for the 'presentist' regime of historicity now in place: "Given to us as radically other, the past has become a world apart"<sup>28</sup>. The genres of micro-history and of history of everyday life are characteristic of this 'presentist' consciousness of the alterity of the past. This is, Nora suggests, a consciousness of alterity paradoxically clothed in the garb of directness (oral literature, quoting informants to render intelligible their voices being the characteristic of these two historical genres)<sup>29</sup>: "It is no longer genesis that we seek but instead the decipherment of what we are in the light of what we are no longer"<sup>30</sup>.

Characteristic for the 'presentist' regime of historicity according to Nora is the total abandonment of the ideal of 'resurrecting the past' and – as the 'epistemological' consequence – the central place occupied by the notion of representation<sup>31</sup>. Hutton also connects the renewed interest in narrative – including grand narrative – to this self-reflective, 'representational' stage of historiography. This starts with Hayden White's *Metahistory*, published in 1973, manifesting the end of the traditional trust in the 'transparency' of narrative and of the "uncritical faith of historians in the neutrality of historical narrative, a faith whose bedrock was fact"<sup>32</sup>.

The result of the acknowledgement of the fact that our relation to the past is inevitably shaped by our present modes of representation has been what Hartog has baptised the 'presentist' regime of historicity. Presentism is the result of the gradual 'forgetting' of the past *and* of the future in the second half of the twentieth century, according to Hartog, with the omnipresence of 'the present' as a result. 'Presentism' pretends to be its own horizon and it tries to shape both the future and the past according to its own image, so to speak, as a-temporal replica's of itself: "no past no future, or it generates its own past and its own future," in Hartog's own apt phrasing<sup>33</sup>.

Hartog exemplifies this 'presentist' condition in the transition from the 'monument' to the 'memorial', "as less of a monument and more a place of memory, where we endeavour to make memory live on, keeping it vivid and handing it on"<sup>34</sup>. Under the 'presentist' regime of historicity, the nation state is no longer the central custodian of 'history-memory', because its definition of 'national history memory' is "rivalled and contested in the name of partial, sectorial or particular memories (groups, associations, enterprises, communities, which all wish to be recognised as legitimate, equally legitimate, or even more legitimate)"<sup>35</sup>. Characteristic for this 'presentist' condition is the circumstance that, for the associations, "the value of the objects that they elect is found partially in the fact that they have sought their recognition. Overall it is more a question of local patrimony, joining memory and territory with operations aimed at producing territory and continuity for those who live there today."<sup>36</sup> So, paradoxically, the 'memory' being referred to under the 'presentist' regime of historicity is no 'real' memory at all: "Heritage associations demonstrate the construction of a memory that is not given, and therefore not lost. They work toward the constitution of a symbolic universe. Heritage should not be studied from the past but rather from the present and concerning the present"<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 16.

<sup>28</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 17. Nora does not use Hartog's terms 'regime of historicity' or 'presentism', but the germs of these ideas are nevertheless already present in his thought.

<sup>29</sup> Nora's diagnosis and imagery of the present state of history is also found in F. Ankersmit, 'History and Postmodernism', in F. Ankersmit (ed.), *History and Tropology. The Rise and Fall of Metaphor*, (Berkeley, 1994), 162-182, more particularly in Ankersmit's comparison of 'modern' or 'essentialist' history with a tree and 'post-modern' history with its leaves (175-6), and in his identification of history of everyday life and micro-history as the typical 'present' (or postmodern) genres of history (174-7).

<sup>30</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 17-18. Here too, we find the same idea in F. Ankersmit, 'The sublime dissociation of the past: or how to be(come) what one is no longer', in: *History and Theory*, 40, 3, (2001): 295-323.

<sup>31</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 17.

<sup>32</sup> Hutton, 'Recent Scholarship on Memory and History', 535. For the background see also A. Rigney, 'Narrativity and Historical Representation', in *Poetics Today*, 12, 3, (1991): 591-605, and A. Megill, "Grand narrative" and the discipline of history', in F. Ankersmit and H. Kellner (eds.), *A New Philosophy of History*, (London, 1995), 151-174. Hayden White has been one of the most important defenders of 'presentism' in the domain of philosophy of history. See, H. Paul, *Masks of Meaning. Existentialist Humanism in Hayden Whites Philosophy of History*, (Groningen, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History', 106.

<sup>34</sup> Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 14.

<sup>35</sup> Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 14.

<sup>36</sup> Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 14.

<sup>37</sup> H. Glevarec and G. Saez, *Le patrimoine saisi par les associations*, 263, quoted by Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 14.



This 'presentist' analysis has recently also been put to work to one of the fundamental, and until recently completely un-theorised, notions of 'scientific' history: the notion of 'the archive' – which also brings us back to the nation state because the birth of 'scientific' history was directly connected to the birth of the state archives. On this fundamental point too, the nation (-state) has been built into the very heart of 'scientific' national history. Therefore, it was to be expected that after the historians' facts, sources and narratives have been deconstructed as constructed artefacts embedded in nation/state power relations; now the 'archive' and the 'archive fever' are being problematised too<sup>38</sup>.

'Presentism', however, as a mode of temporal thinking has serious flaws, according to Hartog, which manifest themselves in a kind of return of the 'repressed' temporal dimensions of the past and the future in the present. In this respect too, his diagnosis is more refined than Nora's'. Symptomatic of the 'return' of the past is the tendency to view the present (in the making) with the eye of history "as a present, which has *not yet* completely happened and has *already* past. As a present that would be for itself its own past."<sup>39</sup> An example is the tendency of the media to produce 'historical events' nearly every day. Hartog signals the 'return' of the future, among other things, in the media's characteristic obsession with predictions and polls: "The poll is a tool to forecast the future without, so to speak, moving out of the present. It is a photograph, which in a way suppresses time."<sup>40</sup> Concern for the future can also be detected in the preoccupation with conservation and, not mentioned by Hartog, in the environmental movement.

From the mid-1970s onwards, the 'leak' of 'presentism' to the past has manifested itself in the anxiety about

The question of identity, in a search for roots, a longing for memory, concerned with 'patrimony', worried about conservation of monuments, of old and not so old places, the preservation of nature. Anxious about the recovery of what had been lost, was about to be lost or worried about what had been 'forgotten' (especially the memory of World War Two)<sup>41</sup>.

Last, but not least, '1989' and its consequences strongly suggested that the past really *does* exist – *pace* Sartre – and has highlighted the problems of the presentist 'museified gaze' directed towards all that surrounds us. In this context, Hartog uses the very illuminating example of the Berlin Wall: "The destruction of the Berlin wall, followed by its instantaneous museification is a good example, also just as quickly, its merchandising"<sup>42</sup>.

So, overall, according to Hartog, 'presentism' is fundamentally insecure of itself: "The past is knocking at the door, the future at the window and the present discovers that it has no floor to stand on"<sup>43</sup>. Like Nora, Hartog interprets the craze for memory and heritage as a sign *not* of continuity between the present and the past, but as a sign of rupture and of discontinuity due to the acceleration of change: "Heritage is one way of experiencing ruptures, of recognising them and reducing them, by locating, selecting, and producing semaphores. [...] Heritage is a recourse in times of crisis"<sup>44</sup>. In the end, after the catastrophes of the twentieth century and after the significant accelerations in the experience of time, the sudden appearance of memory and patrimony should not surprise us, according to Hartog: on the contrary, "The question could even be: 'Why did it take so long?'"<sup>45</sup>. Under the 'presentist' condition, memory and patrimony are the winners in their competition with history:

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<sup>38</sup> For an overview see M. Manoff, 'Theories of the archive from across the disciplines', in *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 4, 1, (2004): 9-25; T. Cook, 'Archival science and postmodernism: new formulations for old concepts', in *Archival Science*, 1, (2001): 3-24. Essential in this context have been Michel Foucault's notion of the archive in *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1969) and Derrida's *Archive fever* (1995). Z. Manoff, 'Theories of the archive', (12): "The methods for transmitting information shape the nature of the knowledge that can be produced. Library and archival technology determine what can be archived and therefore what can be studied. Thus Derrida claims 'archivization produces as much as it records the event'", (15): "Government documents may prove useful, but not necessarily because of their accuracy or objectivity", and (20): "All conservational decisions are contingent, temporary, and culturally self-referential, even self-laudatory: we want to preserve the best of ourselves for those who follow".

<sup>39</sup> Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History', 108.

<sup>40</sup> Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History', 108-9. Another 'presentist' symptom is the extreme valorisation of youth – a hopeless attempt to stop time.

<sup>41</sup> Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History', 109.

<sup>42</sup> Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 14.

<sup>43</sup> Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History', 110.

<sup>44</sup> Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 15.

<sup>45</sup> Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 16.

The past attracts more than history; the presence of the past, the evocation and the emotions win out over keeping a distance and mediation; finally, this heritage is itself influenced by acceleration: it should be done quickly before it is too late, before the night falls and today has completely disappeared<sup>46</sup>.

So, two centuries after the founders of 'scientific' history - unconsciously following Hegel - told historians that only 'time will tell' and that temporal distance is a precondition of any 'scientific' history, both time and temporal distance have turned from a solution into a problem again. After the catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both Minerva's owl and Clio's owl are no longer trusted. As far as source of meaning is concerned, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century both the past and the future have collapsed simultaneously, so to speak<sup>47</sup>.

The only sensible thing historians can do under this 'presentist' condition, according to Hartog, is to reflect on their own temporal position in a comparative way and argue for it explicitly. This does, of course, not 'cure' this condition, but makes it at least self-reflexive:

To write history dominated by the point of view of the future, as a teleology, is no longer possible, to restore the old *historia magistra* could be a temptation, but intellectually, and not only intellectually, not very satisfactory! And the present itself, as we have just seen, is not a firm ground. So the historian has no choice but to build a (his) point of view as explicitly as possible. The comparative approach seems to me to offer a possible answer: both modest and complex<sup>48</sup>.

Interesting for our project is that Hartog ends his reflections on historiography with the problem of national historiography in its relationship to European historiography – the object of the NHIST programme. In any case, 'European' historiography cannot be 'the mere juxtaposition of national histories'. However, this position presupposes 'national' history is unproblematic – which is obviously *not* the case:

But the nation seems once again an unavoidable fact and an insistent, or even bloody question. How should we write national history without reactivating the patterns of nineteenth century historiography: that is to say, the close association of progress and the nation (the nation as progress and history as progress of the nation), or without presenting the nation as a paradise lost? It is here that it would be especially useful to be able to reopen the past, and look at it as a set of possible pasts which were at one time possible future and to show how the way of the national state, with its national or nationalist historiography, generally won out<sup>49</sup>.

Hartog does not indicate how the alternatives for national histories look like, nor is he very specific about the form that historiographical self-reflexivity should take. The NHIST programme, however, does exactly that by conceptualising the alternatives for national history in a systematic way – that is, by making a conceptual distinction between spatial (i.e. sub- and supra-national) and non-spatial (i.e. religious, class etc.) alternatives to the nation and by tracing these alternatives over time in their competition with national histories. In this way, the NHIST programme is pursuing the same objectives that Arif Dirlik has set out for world history, essentially reconstructing and deconstructing the conceptual and political wars going on in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century between alternative conceptions of history. What Dirlik states for the spatial alternatives to national history holds for its non-spatial alternatives as well:

My rehearsal of the historicity, boundary instabilities, and internal differences – if not fragmentations – of nations, civilisations, and continents is intended to underline the historiographically problematic nature of [world] histories organized around such units. These entities are products of efforts to bring political or conceptual order to the world – political and conceptual strategies of containment, so to speak. This order is achieved only at the cost of suppressing alternative spatialities and temporalities, however, as well as covering over processes that went into their making. A [world] history organized around these entities itself inevitably partakes of these same suppressions and cover-ups<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Hartog, 'Time and Heritage', 16.

<sup>47</sup> See J. Torpey, 'The future of the past: a polemical perspective' in Peter Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness*, (Toronto, 2004), 240-255, 250: "The discrediting of the twin forces that dominated the twentieth-century history – namely, nationalism and socialism/communism – has promoted a pervasive 'consciousness of catastrophe' among the educated segments of Euro-Atlantic society".

<sup>48</sup> Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History', 111.

<sup>49</sup> Hartog, 'Time, History and the Writing of History', 112.

<sup>50</sup> Dirlik, 'Performing the world', 18-19.

What we will do in the rest of this chapter is have a closer look why and how the nation and national history won out over competing non-spatial 'codes of difference' framed in other master narratives, that is: religion, ethnicity, class and gender.

## II. THE NATION AND ITS 'OTHER': RELIGION, ETHNICITY, CLASS AND GENDER.

Before analysing how national master narratives relate to other master narratives, we first need a preliminary clarification of the concept of the nation. Therefore, we have framed a cluster of questions regarding the *contents* of the representations of the nation<sup>51</sup>. A first question in this regard is the question of the *origins* of the nation. All representations of the nation presuppose that the nation found its origins somewhere in space and in time. Accordingly, different representations of the nation usually harbour different ideas about the nations' origins. Were they all dependent on foundational myths? And where were those myths located in time and space? Most representations of the nation also contain ideas about *founding figures* and about *catastrophic periods or events*, in which inside or outside forces seriously threatened the continuity of the nation. Two common questions to be addressed are, therefore: which types of events are represented as catastrophic? And how were national heroes and national villains portrayed? Another common motive in many representations of the nation is a *cycle* of a phase of original birth and of flowering of an *Urvolk*, followed by a phase of existential threat, decline and/or 'death', and ending in the 'rebirth' of the nation. To what degree did all national histories depend on Christian/Hegelian stories of progress and decadence followed by the same cycle(s)?

Based on a thorough exploration of national narratives, we have asked next whether there have been attempts to replace national with other master narratives. Class master narratives, like their national counterparts, emerged in the nineteenth century, largely as a response to the perceived social crisis caused by industrialisation. They are firmly linked to the structural changes produced by the new economic and social order. The rise of the labour movement everywhere in Europe brought with it the rise of various theories of class, but we know relatively little about their impact on national history writing. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of authors, sometimes not academic historians, produced class histories which tended to use the nation as frame of reference<sup>52</sup>. In some countries, class theories were prominent in economic histories of particular nation states as well as transnational economic histories. Economic and social history journals were founded in many nation states around the turn of the century. The mode of production was one of the strongest rivals of the nation in historical text production. In the early twentieth century, the national histories of Karl Lamprecht in Germany were unusual in their attention to societal issues. The same can be said of the studies of the nascent Annales School in France, or the kind of social history propagated by the Hammonds, the Webbs, R.H. Tawney and G.D.H. Cole in Britain. Institutions such as, for example, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, founded in 1935, explicitly encouraged the writing of a transnational and comparative history of class. There have been several attempts – not restricted to the state-communist historiographies of Eastern Europe after 1945 – to privilege 'class' over 'nation' as the basic framework of analysis and narrative (e.g. in the work of Eric Hobsbawm, and, in a very different way, of Jürgen Kuczynski). However, genuinely transnational and comparative attempts have been relatively rare.

Much more common was the introduction of 'class' into the nation. Different national historiographies moved towards social history at different times in the twentieth century, but invariably such moves brought with them attempts to merge notions of 'class' with notions of 'nation'. 'Class' thus became an important part of national history and challenged the older almost exclusively political constructions of the nation. Yet social histories by no means signalled the abandonment of earlier national commitments. The hyper-nationalism of German *Volksgeschichte*<sup>53</sup>, the intense patriotism of leading figures of the Annales School and the much-commented-on Englishness of the Webbs already indicate that class and national perspectives could go together rather than be opposites. The same goes

<sup>51</sup> Cf. H. Schulze (ed.), *Staat und Nation in der europäischen Geschichte* (München, 1994).

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, E. Levasseur, *Histoires des classes ouvrières en France depuis la conquête de Jules César jusqu'à la Révolution*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1859); E. Levasseur, *Histoires des classes ouvrières en France depuis 1789 jusqu'à nos jours*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1867); F. Garido, *Historia de las clases trabajadoras*, 4 vols (Madrid, 1870).

<sup>53</sup> On *Volksgeschichte*, see W. Oberkrome, *Volksgeschichte. Methodische Innovation und völkische Ideologisierung in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft 1918 - 1945* (Göttingen, 1993). See also, Dirlik, 'Performing the world', 18-19. Dirlik notes, "From a historiographical perspective, a national perspective on the past, including the national past, is woefully inadequate, as some of the most important forces in the shaping of the past transcend national boundaries. The same may be said of a world history that is conceived in terms of national and civilizations" (20).

for the Dutchness of the self-proclaimed Dutch Marxist historian, Jan Romein. National institutes, dedicated to the study of class and labour history, were founded after the Second World War and often took the nation as framework for a class perspective on national history. (e.g. the Italian network of the *Istituti Gramsci*, the French *Institut français d'histoire sociale*, or the German *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*). Social history, often informed by a class perspective, had its heyday between the 1950s and the 1970s, when it was all the rage in most West European historiographies. With the onset of a new, post-industrial era in the 1970s, the class master narratives declined and found itself in serious crisis (e.g. debates on both the English and French revolutions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively saw an important shift from social to political history perspectives during the 1980s)<sup>54</sup>. Only in Communist states did class master narratives cling to predominance, largely because of the tied nature of Communist historiographies.

Nationalism and national master narratives could be ethnically based, but they did not have to be: they could equally rely on language, culture, politics, or citizenship. In fact, one of the most well established ideas in contemporary nationalism studies is the distinction between 'ethnic' and 'civic' forms of nationalism. It can be traced back to controversies between French and German historians over the territories of Alsace and Lorraine after the German Reich, following the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, had annexed them<sup>55</sup>. Yet most of the typologies which see individual nation states as representatives of one particular type of nationalism are deeply flawed on account of the fact that 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalisms often, if not always, appear side by side in national histories. Even pluricultural states, such as Switzerland and Belgium, which could only construct ethnic definitions with the nation with some difficulty, did not develop a purely civic nationalism, although those states were undoubtedly more inclined to opt for civic forms of nationalism. One does not have to follow the argument that all national identities were ultimately ethnically grounded<sup>56</sup> to conclude that some of the most violent and obnoxious forms of nationalism in the modern era, including racist nationalism in Nazi Germany, were and continue to be ethnically-based. In Nazi Germany, race master narratives even attempted to sideline and replace national master narratives. Yet even some of the liberal national narratives of British historiography were informed by race perspectives, e.g. the combination of Gladstonian liberal nationalism with a philological racism in E. A. Freeman, Regius Professor of History at Oxford from 1884 to 1892. The contemporary revival of ethnic nationalism in Eastern Europe also points to the need to include ethnicity/race in the crucial factors to be looked at here. We will concentrate on establishing which myths about the ethnic origins of nations were particular prominent in the construction of national histories across Europe. How were those ethnic origins and character traits of a nation related to key junctures in that particular nation's history? Were alleged national values and allegedly permanent national characteristics constructed from those ethnic character traits or were they derived from political and cultural constructions of the nation state? What was the specific mixture between ethnic and non-ethnic definitions of the nation? Were there junctures in the writing of national history where more ethnic definitions of the nation began to be replaced with non-ethnic ones or vice versa? In some cases, race-based histories – or, more widely conceived, ethnic histories – have also attempted to cut across national borders. Geopolitical concepts have been particularly important in defining the territorial units for those transnational race/ethno-histories which have never been explored in comparative perspective.

Any analysis of the interplay between different identity constructions in national histories must not exclude religious anchors of identity. As Jack Goody has recently reminded us, religion in particular should not be underestimated as a constituent factor of past and contemporary identity struggles in Europe and beyond<sup>57</sup>. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith have argued that "perhaps only religious attachments have rivalled national loyalties in their scope and fervour"<sup>58</sup>. Both religion and the nation have, as Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, provided powerful "membership badges for particular human communities"<sup>59</sup>. Benedict Anderson's influential study on nationalism has paid considerable attention to the merger of print capitalism with Protestantism in its mobilisation of the new reading publics

<sup>54</sup> For an excellent summary of the development of class and labour history in Western Europe see M. van der Linden and L. Heerma van Voss, 'Introduction', in M. van der Linden and L. Heerma van Voss (eds.), *Class and other Identities. Entries to West European Labour Historiography* (Amsterdam, 2001).

<sup>55</sup> An up-to-date exploration of the usefulness of that distinction can be found in M. Hewittson and T. Baycroft (eds), *What is a Nation?* (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>56</sup> A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>57</sup> J. Goody, 'Bitter Icons', in *New Left Review*, 7 (2001): 5-15.

<sup>58</sup> J. Hutchinson and A. Smith, 'Introduction', in J. Hutchinson and A. Smith (eds), *Nationalism* (Oxford 1994), 4. See also: A. Smith, *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>59</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge 1990), 68.

which were to become crucial for the development of early nationalism<sup>60</sup>. The importance of religious identities in nineteenth century Europe has led to debates about whether or not one should perceive the nineteenth century as a second confessional age<sup>61</sup>. In the whole of Europe, the confessionalisation of societies had a lasting impact on conceptions of national history. Religion provided key symbols, rituals and collective practices underpinning national movements and national master narratives. National saints and religious festivals could provide expressions of national sentiment and ambition. Religious identity was also closely linked to linguistic identity, as the Latin script came to be identified with Roman Catholicism and the Cyrillic script with Orthodoxy. Especially where the ruler of the state was at the same time the ex officio head of the church, like in England since 1534, in Russia and in Prussia, a dynastic historiography could merge with a religious one to produce powerful national narratives.

It is doubtful whether one can speak of a gender master narrative (note the gendered nature of 'master'!) in the same way as one speaks about a national or class master narrative. While few histories were consciously structured along gender lines, much historical writing about the nation state has been deeply gendered. The historical profession was, until recently, a predominantly male enterprise. The male identities of historians produced highly gendered fantasies which influenced their views on national history. In many national histories, the enemies of the nation are depicted in feminised forms. At the same time, in periods of decline and facing successful attacks from abroad, national historians were likely to talk about 'the rape of their nation', thereby identifying the enemy nation as male rapist. National saints could be male or female (Brother Klaus in Switzerland, Jeanne d'Arc in France). In the tradition of the high middle ages, the allegorical representations of the state were female, yet active representatives of the states were mostly male (the exception being Marianne). What impact did the gender of national saints have on particular national histories? In many national histories, the awakening of national consciousness is identified with masculine strength and virility.

Nations are also frequently imagined as families bound by blood ties. In Czech national history, the freedoms of Czech women in ancient Czech history were often contrasted with the oppression allegedly suffered by German women – a narrative ploy to underline the allegedly more democratic tendencies of the Czech nation in comparison to its mighty Western neighbour. In countries which relied heavily on natural metaphors to describe national character, those scenarios of nature were also heavily gendered. The relationship between gender and nationalism has become a major area of new research over the past decade<sup>62</sup>, and it is high time to adopt a gender perspective for the comparative analysis of national histories.

To analyse national histories as master narratives already implies a text-centred approach: the prime focus in the NHIST programme is on history as narrative and as discourse – always including the dimension of power and struggle. The nation took a particular form through words and hence much emphasis will have to be placed on the strategic use of language in national histories. What meaning has been given to nations through which stories? Which rules and constraints have structured the understanding of different national pasts?

National histories in Europe can be typified with the help of eight *idealtypical characteristics* – partly derived from the concept of historical identity as will be discussed. We take national identity as the paradigm case of historical identity. These should be seen as a *narrative template* of national histories. First of all, for each nation a *special character* or a *unique national identity* has been claimed in relation to other nations. The unique national identity can be represented in terms of ethnicity (including a *mix* of several ethnic entities like tribes), in terms of religious affiliation, in terms of race, in political terms (e.g. state – nations) or as mixes of the aforementioned criteria. Secondly, such a unique identity was claimed on the basis of the *exclusions of others*. Each nation was defined primarily by delineating it from either internal foes/enemies and/or from other nations – usually neighbouring nations, which were often physically present in the form of minorities within the claimed territorial borders of the nation. National identity was primarily established by *negating* other nations and other groups within the nation. In this sense all national historiography is implicitly or explicitly relational and thus *comparative*.

Thirdly, as a result of constructions of *friend – foe relationships* between nations, *wars* and *battles* have furnished the dominant storylines for many national histories. Smaller nations, however, could also construct their histories around some kind of mediating role they had between larger nations.

<sup>60</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Cambridge 1991).

<sup>61</sup> O. Blaschke, 'Das 19. Jahrhundert: ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 26 (2000): 38-75.

<sup>62</sup> Specifically on historiography, see the path breaking study of B. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women and Historical Practice* (Cambridge/Mass., 1998). See also more generally I. Blom, K. Hagemann and C. Hall (eds), *Gendered Nations. Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000).

Fourthly, the identity of the nation was located in the *common origins* of its members and in their *shared history ever since*. All members of a nation were represented as sharing common glories and common victories – and even more important – common sufferings. This shared national history was usually exemplified in a common set of national heroes, martyrs and villains. These also imply a gender dimension. Historiographical struggles over national identity therefore always include struggles over the nations' origins. Fifthly, as the history of a nation is represented as a continuity from its origins to the present, a nation is typically represented as always having been there. Its original identity is preserved through all changes in time, although it may have been interrupted for long stretches of time – creating the problem of continuity. The problem of continuity also arises in historiography when political ruptures change the accepted representations of continuity and *parts* of a nation's history are rejected afterwards.

Sixthly, many nations were represented as a person (male/female) or as a family. Representations of nations therefore imply gendering. Nations, for instance, could be represented as being raped by other nations or could be rescued by its male/female hero-characters. Seventhly, a nation was essentially represented as a harmonious unity and only existing as a unity. This is already implied by the family model of the nation, but also by the family model of the multi-ethnic empires. In this sense, multi-ethnic empires can perhaps be seen as 'a family of families', headed by a 'father' of one of its families. The lesson of national history is unequivocally 'united we stand, divided we fall'. This lesson was and is the implicit or explicit practical function of the study of national history, professional and otherwise. The struggle against foreign oppression is usually represented as the struggle for internal freedom. The nation knows of no internal dividing lines – and therefore there has been a clear tension between national master narratives and the master narratives of class in particular, class being a relational concept *par excellence*<sup>63</sup>. Eighthly, a nation is usually represented as serving the cause of justice: 'God is on our side' held for each nation. Many nations claimed a special relationship with God including a special 'protective' Christian mission vis-à-vis non-Christian 'intruders'. Nationalism has therefore been plausibly interpreted as the nationalisation of Christianity. Because of the Christian roots of most representations of the nation in Europe, Islam has usually been represented as the enemy of Europe and as the negation of Europe. Islam has functioned as Europe's negative identity, and not only in those regions where there have been actual wars against Islamic rulers<sup>64</sup>.

### III. THE CONCEPT OF HISTORICAL IDENTITY AND THE HISTORICITY OF HISTORY

Before going into the relationships between the different constructions or markers of collective identities of ethnicity, religion and class in European historiographies, some conceptual clarification is also needed as to the concept of identity. When we are referring to the identity of individuals and collectives, we refer to the properties that make them different from each other in a particular frame of reference. It is on the basis of their particular set of properties that we can identify them *as* individuals and tell them apart. Identity (or sameness) and difference (or otherness), therefore, presuppose each other: without identity, there is no difference and without difference, there is no identity. For example, the notion of personal identity or of a 'Self' presupposes the notion of the 'non-Self' or of the 'Other'. Therefore, there can be no 'Other' in any *absolute* sense, because the concepts of the 'Self' and of the 'Other' are conceptually related<sup>65</sup>. Ethnicity, religion, class and gender can thus be conceived of as societal 'codes of difference'<sup>66</sup>.

On closer analysis, identity and difference thus turn out to be fundamentally *relational* concepts. *Essentialist* notions of identity (which imply that nationhood and ethnicity are pure and invariant essences) are based thus on conceptual confusion, although this does not lessen the practical

<sup>63</sup> Although the national master narrative could also be at odds with the religious master narrative, this was only the case in situations where there was more than one important religion. In situations where there was clearly one dominant religion – like Lutheranism in the Scandinavian countries or Catholicism in the Iberian countries – the master narratives of the nation and of religion did not collide or compete. In these cases religion could *submerge* in the nation. This phenomenon of 'submerged collective identities' or 'submerged codes of difference' deserves further attention.

<sup>64</sup> This comparison is based heavily on the draft chapters provided by the members of Team 2 of the NHIST programme. We are extremely grateful for their participation in the programme and all their hard work over the past three years. Compare Claus Leggewie's remarks on the Holocaust as "negativer Gründungsmythos" for present day Europe in 'Arbeit an einem europäischem Gedächtnis', *Der Standard* (7 July 2006).

<sup>65</sup> S. G. Crowell, 'There is no Other. Notes on the logical place of a concept', in *Paideuma*, 44 (1998): 13-29.

<sup>66</sup> R. Katoryano (ed.), *Les Codes de Différence. Race – Origine – Religion. France – Allemagne – États Unis*, (Paris, 2005).

consequences of such essentialist confusion (e.g. ethnic cleansing)<sup>67</sup>. When one locates historical understanding between the poles of familiarity and strangeness, as has been usual in the tradition of *Historismus*, this characterisation can directly be connected to the dichotomy of 'Self' (familiarity) and 'Otherness' (strangeness). Moreover, the fundamental multiplicity of descriptions of identity can also be connected to its relational quality, because one can relate any 'Self' to various 'Others'.

This relational quality of identity also holds for the notion of *collective identity*. We can identify an 'in-group' - a 'we' - only *in relation to* an 'out-group' - a 'they'. As the Greeks in Antiquity were themselves aware, there were only Greeks in relation to barbarians, and there was only an Orient in relation to an Occident. There can only be *inclusion* in a collective if there is at the same time *exclusion*. And, as with all issues of collective identity, there is a political dimension attached to this conceptual question (as has become clear in the recent discussion whether Turkey belongs to 'Europe'). The notion of a 'limited identity' is therefore a *category mistake* because identity is limited by *definition*.

In history, we can observe the relational character of collective identity concretely because we can trace the demarcations of in-groups from out-groups *in statu nascendi*. The discourses on national identity are a case in point. For instance, the discourse on German national identity in the early nineteenth century was conducted by opposing characteristics of the Germans to characteristics of the French and of the Slavs. Similar observations pertain to the discourse on the Greek identity, where the Turks often functioned as the identity *ex negativo* – and the other way around. So we can observe that representation of collective identity is closely related to particular *other* collective identities in a *negative* way<sup>68</sup>. This is the case because identity is constructed by negation, as Spinoza, Hegel and Foucault have shown. This also holds for the special cases in which a new identity is constructed by negating one's *own* former identity. This phenomenon is not unusual in the aftermath of traumatic experiences: both individuals and collectives may try to start a 'new life' by adopting a new identity. This transformation is usually accompanied by publicly acknowledging past 'mistakes' and by trying to make up for them. The Federal Republic of Germany offers a clear historical example because it defined itself politically as the democratic negation of totalitarian Nazi-Germany while simultaneously negating 'the other German state' – the GDR – as just another brand of totalitarian rule.

In history, this *negative bond* between collective identities is often connected to some sense of being under threat and is therefore embedded in power-relations. In the early nineteenth century the Germans, for instance, had recently had negative experiences with Napoleonic France. The same holds for many of the Slavonic nations in East-Central Europe vis-à-vis both their German and their Russian neighbours. As mighty neighbours are usually perceived as (at least potentially) threatening, the negative aspects of collective identities are probably most outspoken among the less powerful collectives. Furthermore, because power-relations may change over time, we can also expect parallel changes in the discourses of national identities. This *negative bond* between different collective identities – this need of a 'negation' in articulating one's own identity – also helps to explain another important historical phenomenon in processes of nation building, that of the collective *exclusion* of minorities by majorities – ranging from discrimination to expulsion and annihilation – especially in periods of crisis. During crises (linguistic, cultural or religious) minorities are usually represented as some kind of '*aliens*' or '*strangers*', who pose a threat to the very identity of those who are represented as 'the majority'<sup>69</sup>. From this angle, the simultaneous rise of nationalism and of popular anti-Semitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is far from accidental, nor the fact that anti-Semitism was especially virulent in regions with suppressed forms of nationalism, like in East-Central Europe.

Exclusion, necessary for the construction of collective identity, turns into a *practical* danger as soon as the demarcation between an in-group and an out-group turns into a *moral* demarcation that excludes the out-group from the domain of moral considerations. According to Jan Assmann, this has been the case since monotheistic religions displaced polytheistic religions in Antiquity. Religious monism has unintentionally fostered moral intolerance, so his argument goes, by introducing the notion of 'false gods' and this is 'the price' we pay for monotheism. By linking the demarcation between the in-group of true believers and the out-group of believers in 'false gods' to *moral* demarcations, monotheistic religions have paved the way for the 'immoral' practices of nationalism, including 'ethnic cleansing': "The distinction [...] is the one between true and false in religion [...]. Once this distinction is drawn, there is no end of re-entries or subdistinctions. These cultural or intellectual distinctions construct a universe that is full not only of meaning, identity, and orientation but also of conflict, intolerance and

<sup>67</sup> See N. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, (Harvard 2001).

<sup>68</sup> See C. Koller, *Fremdherrschaft. Ein politischer Kampfbegriff im Zeitalter des Nationalismus*, (Frankfurt a.M., 2005).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Wertsch on Russian historiography in 'Specific Narratives and Schematic Narrative Templates'

violence”<sup>70</sup>. So there is a deep analogy between religion and nationalism as forms of collective identity, according to those who regard nationalism as a secular religion.

Before we turn to the concept of *historical* identity, it is important to keep in mind that *historical* identity is just *one* type of identity. Individuals, for instance, can also be identified through their *biological* identity, that is their fingerprints, their DNA-profile or their iris-scan. Furthermore, in the not so distant past, serious attempts have been made to identify collectives in terms of racial or class identities. So the identification of individuals and collectives in terms of *historical* identity is not self-evident and requires an explanation. Moreover, the very distinctions between history and nature, and between culture and nature, are quite recent historical ‘inventions’, as both Moses Finley and Reinhart Koselleck have pointed out<sup>71</sup>. Finley has emphasised that Ancient Greece, the supposed cradle of history as a discipline, had a clear *anti*-historical mindset and favoured ‘myth’ – poetry, epic and tragedy – over history. This is because ‘myth’ contained truths about life in general, so truths of *general* significance: “All Greek philosophers, to the last of the neo-Platonists, were evidently agreed in their indifference to history (as a discipline)”. Therefore, “Interest [in history] must be accounted for: what part of the past and how much of it? Interest to what purpose, to fulfil what function? [...] As for the people at large, there is no reason to think that they ever moved beyond the old myths and the occasional bits of mythicized history. Why should they have, after all?” This observation probably is still valid to our very day.

Finley’s explanation for the (partial) break of this mythical tradition by Herodote and Thucydides and their introduction of political history harks back to the introduction of the *polis*. Koselleck locates the birth of history as an object and as a discipline studying this object in the second half of the eighteenth century: “The potential similarity and iterability of naturally formed histories was consigned to the past, while History itself was denaturalized and formed into an entity about which, since that time, it has not been possible to philosophize in the way one can about nature”. Many historians are inclined to forget about the *very historicity of the idea of history*, because it means that ‘doing history’ is in need of an analysis, an explanation and a justification<sup>72</sup>.

Nevertheless, when we are talking about the *historical* identity of individuals and collectives, we refer to a type of identity that is defined by its *development in time*. The paradigm case of historical identity can therefore be conceived on the model of personal identity (although we always must be very careful not to attribute the properties of individuals to collectives)<sup>73</sup>. The identity of a subject consists of the set of characteristics, which the subject develops over time in interaction with its environment and that set it apart from similar subjects. This set of characteristics is not a random set, if we are talking about *historical* and *personal* identity, but must relate to *important* characteristics. It is also possible in principle to identify individuals through their fingerprints or iris, but we would not associate personal identity with properties of that kind.

The same holds for the concept of historical identity. In both cases, identity does not just mean telling individuals apart from each other (i.e., describing *numerical* identity), but it means a *characterisation* of individuality (i.e. describing a *qualitative* identity). It is no accident, therefore, that the biography, in which an individual develops a personal identity in time, has often been regarded as the paradigm of doing history as such (by Dilthey, for instance). *Historical* identity thus has a paradoxical quality, because it is *identity through change in time*. When we are referring to the historical identity of Germany or of Belgium, we are thus referring to a collective, which *retained* a particular identity over time in its interactions with its environment – although Germany and Belgium *changed* at the same time. The assumption that history equals change thus presupposes that stability means absence of change: the historical presupposes the unhistorical. Therefore, *historical identity* is essentially *persistence through change* or the *identity of identity and non-identity*, to quote the apt Hegelian formulation of Odo Marquard<sup>74</sup>.

The issue of historical identity is also conceptually linked to the issue of *origins* and the issue of *development* – two constitutive concepts of history as a ‘science’. Because all representations of historical identity deal with changes in time, all historical representations are faced with the temporal

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<sup>70</sup> J. Assmann, ‘The Mosaic Distinction: Israel, Egypt, and the Invention of Paganism’, in: *Representations*, 56, (1996), 48-67, 48.

<sup>71</sup> M. Finley, ‘Myth, Memory and History’, in *History and Theory*, 4, 3, (1965): 292-302; Koselleck, ‘Historia Magistra Vitae’, 32.

<sup>72</sup> For an exploration of the various functions and justification of history, see C. Lorenz, ‘History, forms of representation and functions’, in N. Smelser and P. Baltus (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* volume 10, (Oxford, 2001), 6835 –6842.

<sup>73</sup> On the many pitfalls of constructions of collective identity, see L. Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität. Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur*, (Reinbek, 2000).

<sup>74</sup> O. Marquard, *Apologie des Zufälligen*, (Stuttgart, 1986), 361.



problem of origins, as we have observed earlier on. Before the *changes* and the *development* of national identity can be investigated, its *existence* and thus its *genesis* must be clarified – unless we presuppose that collective identities are naturally given and that their existence does not require explanation. In that case, however, we are *by definition* no longer dealing with history, so we can leave this possibility aside. We expect that a history of a collective identity – say of the German or French nation – will inform us about its origins in time. However, the question ‘where did the German nation or the Belgian come from and how did it develop?’ already presupposes what must be clarified, that is: the *existence* of a German and a Belgian nation. Therefore, in history struggles and debates about existence and origins always go together.

National historians have not, to any significant extent, reflected on this paradoxical ‘*unhistorical*’ component of ‘*scientific*’ historical thinking. In this, it shares the fate of the very historicity of the idea of history, among other reasons because it undermines its very claim of ‘scientific’ history to being opposed to ‘unhistorical’ and ‘philosophical’ Enlightenment-thinking. Harold Mah has traced this symptomatic ‘blind spot’ back to the very origins of *Historismus* in Herder and Möser – but his argument holds for national history *as such*:

Both Herder’s and Möser’s historicist histories required the assumption of a mythical past. A mythical event or development functioned for them as a privileged origin establishing a standard whose continuous influence was then perceived to be disseminated throughout the rest of history, so that subsequent events or developments could be measured against it or legitimated by it. That originating event or development thus overshadowed what came after it; it reduced or even cancelled out the historical significance of subsequent events. German tribalism thus defined the truly German, while the French culture that many of Germany’s rulers had adopted in the eighteenth century was rejected as alien or anti-German. [...] Historism [= *Historismus*], in other words, can paradoxically be seen as the expression of a desire to overcome history, whether it was the cosmopolitan influence of French culture or other undesirable developments and political life [...]. The importance of this ahistorical classical thinking in a deeply historicizing philosophy is a paradox that suggests the same motive that is suggested in historicist myths of origin – namely, that one attends to historical development in its most elaborate way in order to overcome history, to transcend its contradictions, transience, and mortality<sup>75</sup>.

Hence, although ‘scientific’ history, based on *Historismus*, claimed to ‘historise’ the whole past, it has refrained stubbornly from ‘historising’ *itself*, from analysing its own origins and from reflecting on the motives behind its ‘historicizing’ drive<sup>76</sup>. On closer analysis, paradoxically, these motives turn out *not* to be very different from the motives of the Ancient Greeks to prefer ‘poetry’ over history, all its critique of ‘a-historical’ thinking from Antiquity to Enlightenment notwithstanding: to get some existential foothold in this transient world of mortal souls in the form of general truths. The main difference between the mindset of the ancient Greeks and the ‘scientific’ historians since the nineteenth century is that the former were open about their desire for general truths while the latter prefer to cloak their desire for ‘lessons of history’ in the form of ‘the origins of’ and of ‘the catastrophic events’ of their nations<sup>77</sup>. Therefore, the difference between the ‘pre-national’, ancient ‘regime of historicity’ – based on the idea of *Historia magistra vitae* – and the modern, ‘national’ ‘regime of historicity’ – based on the idea that the future gives the meaning to the past – may not be so rigid in their practical aspect after all.

No wonder the question ‘history for what?’ has been pushed outside the borders of disciplinary history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after furthering the cause of the nation had been the self-evident goal of national historians during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The same holds for the thinkers who dared to put this question on the historians’ table – starting with Nietzsche. The same fate befell Michel Foucault, who put a fundamental question mark behind history’s question of origins (including its focus on continuity between origin and the present, that is, development) and who replaced it by his ‘genealogy’ (with its focus on discontinuity, dispersion and contingency) and whose ideas have later been exploited by Nora<sup>78</sup>. So much for the paradoxes of ‘scientific’ history and its motives for ‘doing history’.

<sup>75</sup> H. Mah, ‘German Historical Thought in the Age of Herder, Kant, and Hegel’, in Kramer and S. Mah (eds.), *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, 143-166, here: 160-161. Compare Mark Phillips similar observations concerning the authoritative formulation of historicism in the Anglo-Saxon sphere in Collingwood’s *Idea of History*: Phillips, ‘Distance and historical representation’, esp.135-138.

<sup>76</sup> This ‘blind spot’ of ‘scientific’ history also becomes visible in the very marginal position of historiography within the profession. Historiography is usually not regarded as ‘real’ history. Philosophy of history is of course not regarded as a proper activity of historians at all.

<sup>77</sup> See E. Runia, ‘Presence’, in *History and Theory*, 45, 1, (2006): 1-30, He signalises the discourse of trauma as the dominant present form in which meaning is mobilized in historiography without making this explicit (4).

<sup>78</sup> See T. Flynn, ‘Foucault’s Mapping of History’, and J. Rouse, ‘Power/Knowledge’, in G. Gutting (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, (Cambridge, 2005), 29-48 and 95-122.

#### IV. THE GENDERING OF NATIONAL NARRATIVES

Regardless of the fact that women's and gender history has re-conceptualised the field of historical studies over the past decades<sup>79</sup>, the gendering of national narratives has hardly been researched so far. Pioneering works such as, for example, the ones by Bonnie Smith and Angelika Epple have started to shed some light on the way in which gender has framed the narratives of the nation<sup>80</sup>, but their work has still only managed to provide intriguing glimpses rather than comprehensive surveys.

Such work often takes the form of rediscovery of historical texts produced by women. Putting women back onto the map of history writing is an important exercise, as the history of the institutionalisation and professionalisation of historical writing in Europe is also the history of the exclusion of women from that profession. Only if we are beginning to unearth the diverse ways in which women contributed to the scholarship of their husbands, sons and fathers in the nineteenth-century scholar's family, and only if we expand the genre of history writing from narrow 'scientific' history to more popular forms, will we recover the considerable contribution that women made to historical writing throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Mary O'Dowd has demonstrated for Irish women historians, their books sold far more copies, earned their authors far more money and had a far greater impact of society than that of their male colleagues employed by the universities<sup>81</sup>. In Britain, many women historians also directed their activities towards the popularisation of history. Hence they were strongly represented in the Historical Association which was founded to link university scholarship with the work done by schoolteachers and interested 'amateurs' in society. Alice Stopford Green actually became president of the Historical Association in 1915.

If the contribution of women to history writing is increasingly recognised, the question remains; what kind of history did they write? It appears that the choice of topics was a highly gendered affair. Women historians tended to be more interested in the spheres of culture and society and in particular the role of women in culture and society than in the affairs of the state and high politics. True, in countries, where nationalism was an important concern, such as Ireland, women also contributed prominently to the genre of national history writing, but elsewhere it would be fair to say that women historians were heavily underrepresented among those setting themselves up as spokespersons for the nation. The relative lack of concern with national storylines was re-enforced by the rise of women's history in the 1960s. Linked to the emergence of second-wave feminism, women's history focussed on women as marginalised members of society. They often concerned themselves with the doubly marginalised working class women and explored issues concerning their gender and class identities. National identity was of comparatively little concern. When women's history moved to gender history in the 1980s, spearheading the cultural turn in the historical sciences more generally, it began to challenge traditional paradigms and periodisations of national history. Yet the very ghettoisation of women's and gender history into a specific sub-field rarely visited by international, diplomatic and national historians meant that these challenges had as yet only a limited impact on the foundations of national history writing.

Any analysis of the gendering of national narratives has to start by paying proper attention to both social practices of historians and their languages. We have been made aware by Bonnie Smith, how important the 'historical seminar' was to male bonding at nineteenth-century European universities. When it comes to the nation, we can observe that many historians were prominent members of national associations. They frequently perceived it their national duty to use their professional knowledge in order to advance the claims of the nation. As 'scientists' they spoke with greater authority than anyone else about the historical righteousness of the cause of 'their' nation. We also know that these male historians used highly gendered language when talking about their tools of the trade. So, for example, sources became 'princesses' and the archives resembled a beloved woman who had to be 'conquered'. How then, did they gender their narratives of national evolution and growth, which became one of their foremost topics in the nineteenth century?

For a start, they often started out to construct national histories as manly histories. As Thomas Babington Macaulay stated categorically, his English history was not for ladies' coffee tables or for

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<sup>79</sup> For an introduction to the field, see L. L. Downs, *Writing Gender History* (London, 2004).

<sup>80</sup> B. Smith, *The Gender of History. Men, Women and Historical Practice* (Harvard, 1998); A. Epple, *Empfindsame Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Geschlechtergeschichte der Historiographie zwischen Aufklärung und Historismus* (Cologne, 2003).

<sup>81</sup> M. O'Dowd, 'Women', in I. Porciani and J. Tollebeek (eds), *Writing the Nation, vol. 2: Institutions, Networks and Communities of National Historiography - Comparative Approaches* (London, 2008, forthcoming).

girls' boarding schools; it was for men who were engaged in affairs of the state<sup>82</sup>. Indeed, most national heroes that we find in national histories are men. Founders of nations, such as Bismarck or Garibaldi, stand next to saviours of nations such as Churchill or William Wallace, reformers of the nation such as Peter the Great or the Freiherr von Stein, generals and military leaders such as von Moltke, de Gaulle or Gustav Wasa, cultural icons such as Shakespeare, Dante Alighieri, Cervantes, Goethe or Molière and great religious leaders, such as Jan Hus or Martin Luther<sup>83</sup>. Women occasionally make an appearance as anti-heroes. Thus, for example, Lelewel depicts the foreign-born wives of Polish kings as importers of horrid foreign customs weakening the good indigenous Polish traditions. In addition, some Spanish national narratives make a woman, Florinda 'La Cava', the main culprit in the story of the Arab invasions of the peninsula in the eighth century.

Where national histories ascribe attributes to national collectives, they often take care to give them male connotations. Thus, nations are invariably described as organised, educated, rational and virile. The history of state formation and the history of war (both histories are, of course, often deeply interconnected) are mainly themes celebrating the virtues of warriors and statesmen. The close relation between war, the military and nation state formation excluded women<sup>84</sup>. And yet the maleness of national storylines is rarely straightforward. Wars in particular were often connected to brutalities, atrocities and aggression more generally, which could be turned against its male perpetrators. Thus, for example, Austrian stories about Prussia or Czech stories about Germany often deplore the militarism and aggressiveness of a male-dominated paradigm. The Austrian empress Maria Theresa as the good 'mother' of all Austrians gets juxtaposed in Austrian national narratives against the evil and brutal Frederick II of Prussia who treated the nations around Prussia with as much contempt as his own subjects. Czech historians contrasted the alleged harmony between the sexes in the Czech lands with the situation in Germany, where women found themselves repressed by men. Invariably historians of different nationalities portrayed periods of foreign rule using images of rape and sexual harassment. The pacific feminine nature of the nation could be stressed positively against the aggressive and brutal posturing of its enemies.

However, to complicate matters even further, women were not only glorified as pacifiers but also as warriors. German 'sword virgins' fighting against the French occupation in the wars of liberation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Polish women taking arms in the 1831 uprising against Tsarist Russia, Boadicea fighting against the Roman invaders of Britain, or the bakeress of Aljubarrota, contributing to the victory of Portugal over Castilian forces in the battle of Aljubarrota in 1385, are prominent examples of warrior women whose courage and fighting spirit set an example to future generations of nationalists. It is certainly true that some national narratives did their best to edit out these episodes of traditional gender inversion and omit them from their national storylines. In some cases, knowledge of the existence of such female combatants in national struggles had to be recovered (often by women and gender historians) in the second half of the twentieth century<sup>85</sup>. Nevertheless, warrior-like female figures, the most famous being, of course, Jeanne d'Arc, were not unknown to many national narratives in Europe.

Most national narratives were not so much one-sidedly male as they were concerned with depicting the nation as a family in which male and female virtues were combined to produce perfect harmony and unity. Hence, male and female images often appear next to each other. References to the Tsar as a father figure in Russian national narratives coincide with invocations of 'mother Russia'. Frederick II of Prussia appears next to Queen Luise of Prussia. The figure of Britannia is merged with John Bull in British national narratives. Allegories of the nation are female, and the portrayals of an 'awakened' people were often littered with female attributes: they were unspoiled, untouched, pure, emotional and vulnerable. In every national story, then we find women, and representations of women, who matter in national histories. However, when and where did women matter at particular junctures in a nation's history? They matter as queens and rulers, such as Elizabeth I in England, as saints, as mythical founding mothers, such as Libuše in the Czech lands, as those who sacrificed themselves for the nation, such as Wanda in Poland and Princess Olga in Russia. There is no shortage of ancient and not-so-ancient female heroines in national narratives and they often serve as a model mother and national figures, and as a role model for contemporary women of the nation state. Fascist Spanish national narratives thus often depicted Isabel the Catholic as a model to be emulated by the nationally minded

<sup>82</sup> Cited in B. Stuchey, 'Literature, Liberty and Life of the Nation. British Historiography from Macauley to Trevelyan', in S. Berger, M. Donovan and K. Passmore (eds), *Writing National Histories. Western Europe since 1800* (London, 1999), 31.

<sup>83</sup> On national heroes see L. Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identities. Scotland, Norway and Lithuania* (Brussels, 2004).

<sup>84</sup> U. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>85</sup> K. Hagemann, 'Männlicher Muth und deutsche Ehre': *Nation, Krieg und Geschlecht in der Zeit der antinapoleonischen Kriege Preussens* (Paderborn, 2002).

women of Spain. Collectively, national histories tended to stress how virtuous the women of the nation were; as such, female virtue also demonstrated the superior moral character of their nation over that of others. Women were the integrative, bridge building, friendly, protective and homely face of the nation: the counter-part to the warriors and the statesmen which guided the nation through peril and helped it into being.

The positive portrayal of women and feminine virtues was often linked to the introduction and defence of Christianity. Just as the Christian religion softened the barbarian, pagan cultures of Europe and introduced more femininity into national characters, so nations, such as Hungary, Slovakia or Poland, adopted cults of Mary in which the sacrifice of the mother of God and of Jesus himself were likened to the suffering of the nation. Just as suffering and death in the New Testament was followed by resurrection, so would the nation one day rise like the Phoenix from the ashes. However, it was not only in the context of the sacralisation of the nation that women became prominent players in national narratives. Women also became secular martyrs in liberal, anti-absolutist national narratives. Thus, for example, Marianna Pineda, executed by the Spanish monarchical government of Fernando VII in 1831, became a symbol of liberal Spain in many national narratives. If women played an important part in the national narratives of most European nations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the entire stories no doubt remained male-dominated. A continuous and persistent self-feminisation of the national narrative, as in Austria, remained the exception rather than the rule in European historiography.

## V. NARRATIVES OF UNITY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF CONFLICT

National narratives are narratives of unity. They work towards homogeneity. As far as they are also stories of progress – and they usually were –, progress can be measured according to the degree of harmony and unity achieved within the nation state. The national narratives, however, invariably had to deal with threats to such unity – threats which could come from the outside (i.e. hostile other nations, sometimes incorporating territories that were claimed by one's own nation) and from within (i.e. enemies of the nation inside the nation state). Broadly speaking, one can distinguish between ethnic, class and religious threats to national unity. Just as the narratives relied on ethnicity, class and religion to construct the nation, they also had to deal with the same categories as threat to national unity and cohesion.

Ethnic narratives were crucial in challenging multinational and imperial states and carving out a space for one's own statehood. Where the national story could be hung on the continued existence of a state and its institutions, ethnicity was often far less divisive and important than in places where such an institutional backbone was missing. Thus, for example, British statehood and the framing of the national history around the development of the constitution overwrote the stories of potential ethnic conflict between the English and the people on the Celtic fringes of Britain - Ireland being the obvious exception. In much of Eastern Europe, by contrast, the absence of continuous state histories produced a multitude of ethnic narratives often sharing the same geographical spaces<sup>86</sup>.

Apart from the state, the dynasty could be another symbol of integration and unity. National stories were often stories about monarchs and the growth of state power. In empires, such as the Habsburg empire, the emperor and the dynastic principle often sought to replace and overwrite national loyalties and identities. However, as the nineteenth century progressed, this proved to be increasingly difficult. In weak multi-national states, such as Spain, the monarchy also struggled to keep together the different nationalities and cope with stirrings of separate national narratives in places such as Catalonia and the Basque country. Only strong multi-national states such as Britain, where the national storylines merged with imperial storylines which emphatically included the Welsh and the Scots, did the power of national history not pose a serious threat to the existence of the state. However, even here, the failure to bind Catholic Ireland into the Union produced separate national storylines which eventually led to the formation of an independent Irish nation state in 1922.

Within empires and multi-national states, diverse national narratives often had a different status. In the Russian empire, for example, German narratives were frequently identified with Christianity, progress and culture, whereas Lithuanian and Ukrainian narratives enjoyed far less positive imaging. Establishing one's own national narrative and rejecting hegemonic claims of other narratives became an important task of nation builders within empires. The first step was to move out of the 'history-less' status and give one's own nation subject-status – if need be by constructing and inventing a history.

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<sup>86</sup> Spatial identities and their impact on national narratives, and in particular the question of territorial overlaps and their role in writing national histories is the theme of Team 4 in the NHIST programme. See the article within this volume by Tibor Frank and Frank Hadler.

Empires, on the other hand, were keen to disallow such subject-formation. Hence, the Soviet empire under Stalin between the 1930s and the 1950s was totally Russocentric and allowed no parallel or different storylines than the Russian to emerge from the history books.

Ironically, the Russian empire had been the only one to survive the onslaught of the national principle, which, by the end of the First World War, had toppled all other land-based empires in Europe. However, the victory of the exclusively national storylines was arguably short-lived. In the period between 1918 and 1945, ethnic definitions of the nation led to civil war, border conflicts, total war and genocide. Many nations attempted to extend the boundaries of their existing nation state by claiming that large ethnic minorities belonging to the nation found themselves outside of the nation state and needed to be regained. German *Ostforschung* after 1918 and the Greek *Megali* idea were two examples. For the Greek national narrative, the Byzantine lands were really Greek and therefore had to be liberated from the Turks. For the German national narrative, the 'lost territories' in East Central Europe were really German and therefore the Versailles Treaty had to be revised and the territories had to be re-incorporated into the German Reich.

The parallel construction of different ethnic narratives on the same territorial space made the principle of ethnicity so explosive, as it immediately raised the question what to do with the 'ethnic others'. Even in more established nation states, ethnic minorities within the borders of the nation were frequently ignored. The Samis in Norway, Sweden and Finland, the Eskimos in Denmark, the Sinti and Roma in Hungary and Rumania - as ethnic minorities they all were silenced and ignored by the national narratives of the states they lived in. Multiethnic national narratives are only a development of the more recent past. They sadly emerged at a time when the rich tapestry of parallel constructions of ethnic identities in Europe had been cleansed in two world wars and several genocides and when the state boundaries coincided with the ethnic boundaries like never before. Postmodern critiques of the national principle championed and celebrated multiple ethnic narratives and compared the nation to a fractured mirror, in which all sorts of different constructions found its place. One might ask whether a postmodern national history can actually exist that is more than a self-reflexive essay on the many historiographic constructions of national identity<sup>87</sup>. Yet such limitation seems eminently preferable to the return of fixed and exclusive ethnic narratives. For, even in the 1990s, as the case of Yugoslavia demonstrates, ethnicity lost nothing of its deadly and genocidal force, when it came to eradicating multiple forms of ethnic constructions on the same territory<sup>88</sup>.

National narratives in various parts of Europe have also been re-enforced as a result of a perceived threat to the national principle from the European Union. Moreover, the origins of the European Union can be located in an attempt to overcome the deadly power of rival national narratives which had ended in so much destruction in 1945. Was it possible to rebuild a form of transnational political community which would not render national narratives superfluous but defuse their explosive potential? Nowhere in Europe have the European narratives replaced the national narratives. In fact, it has been extremely difficult to construct European stories based on the history of a continent that has been made and remade out of war and conflict. Hence, history is a poisoned chalice for European identity, whereas national narratives continue to thrive on various concoctions of an alleged national past. Still, the European Union has arguably helped to defuse the national narratives.

What remains striking when one looks at the power of ethnic narratives to challenge existing multinational states and empires is how much more successful those multinational states in Western Europe have been in surviving the onslaught of ethnic national narratives. Whether one considers Spain, Britain or Belgium, they still exist as national entities, whereas Russia, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia have all disintegrated when faced with the power of ethnic storylines. Comparing Belgium and Czechoslovakia one might, of course, wonder whether the happy and peaceful parting of the ways between Czechs and Slovaks is not preferable to the ongoing pain and misery involved in the unhappy coming together of the Flemish and the Walloon parts of Belgium<sup>89</sup>. While we must look at each case on its own merits, and while each case will reveal an individual set of explanations for why the ethnic narratives developed different energies and results, one cannot help wondering whether the European Union and its institutional framework has had a part in stabilising national frameworks in Western Europe, whereas the crumbling of the Soviet bloc after 1989 contributed to the demise of multi-national states in Eastern Europe.

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<sup>87</sup> For an example of such a self-reflexive postmodern national history, see the work of K. Jarausch and M. Geyer, *Shattered Past. Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, 2003).

<sup>88</sup> On Yugoslavia, see H. Sundhausen, 'Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten', in M. Flacke, *Mythen der Nationen: 1945: Arena der Erinnerungen*, vol. 1, (Berlin, 2004), 373 - 426.

<sup>89</sup> On Belgium see the somewhat prophetically titled forthcoming book by M. Conway, *The Death of Belgium* (Oxford, forthcoming).

Communist Eastern Europe between 1917 and 1992 witnessed the biggest efforts to merge class and national narratives and overcome the tensions between these two narrative constructions of identity. Communist historiography celebrated the Russian revolution of 1917 as key event of the twentieth century. The Soviet Union became the fatherland of the international proletariat, which had to be protected against the evil forces of international capital. Yet internationalism rarely replaced the national orientation in Communist historiographies. What we find is rather the nationalisation of the class paradigm. Across Communist Eastern Europe after 1945, existing national paradigms were simply 'painted red'. In many countries, such as Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, the lack of an indigenous Marxist historiography was a crucial problem. Here the merger between class and national paradigms had to be created from nothing. Elsewhere, such as in the Czech historiography, they could rely on antecedents in the inter-war period. After all, the united front strategies of the 1930s had already witnessed Communist attempts to nationalise its historical narratives. The strong nationalisation of class narratives throughout Eastern Europe also helps to explain why many Eastern European countries witnessed a relatively smooth transition from Communist to nationalist narratives in the post-Cold War period. However, it did not take Stalin to merge class and nation.

As the class discourse emerged in the nineteenth century, its propagators almost invariably attempted to link it to the national discourse by claiming that the social, cultural and political exclusion of the working class from the nation was unjust. The workers formed the true nation and therefore needed to re-assert its belonging by struggling against their exclusion from the nation by other classes. It was those enjoying 'privilege' at the cost of others who were branded parasitical and standing in the way of unity. The central concern with unity linked class and national narratives. Like national narratives, class narratives were obsessed with finding the origins of national class struggles and creating a continuous history of nationalised class struggles from the dim and distant past to the present. Both narratives were concerned with eradicating sectional, 'selfish' interests. But where was that selfishness located? In many countries, this was the aristocracy, but increasingly, the bourgeoisie and the middle classes also formed the key adversary of unity. This kind of discourse always raised the question which social class should be regarded as the main carrier of the national idea.

The answer to this question was remarkably diverse in different parts of Europe. In Poland, it was the gentry and many historians, like Lelewel, stressed the importance of the struggle of the gentry against absolutism in the fifteenth and sixteenth century for nation formation. In more industrialised countries, notably Britain, constructions of the nation were predominantly middle-class and framed the national storylines around issues of continuing industrial, political and cultural progress. In Scandinavia and the Ukraine, where free peasants formed an important section of the population, the nation was constructed around ideas of peasant liberties which had to be defended against encroachments by an indigenous or, more often, 'foreign' elite. Where the class enemy was foreign, class conflict became easily ethnicised. Hence, in the Habsburg empire, the German-speaking elite was frequently perceived in national narratives of non-Germans as major national and class enemy. Some smaller nations, such as the Czechs and Slovaks self-consciously tended to depict themselves as plebeian nations who stood against 'foreign' elites and aristocratic privilege. However, to complicate matters even further, all European nations witnessed contested and competing constructions of national identity around particular social classes.

In many places, class conflict became a major source of disruption for narratives of national unity. Dominant social forces came to perceive class as a threat, and indeed, it belonged firmly to the language of revolutionary socialism in the nineteenth century. Hence historians, who were often close to and an important part of those dominant social forces, tended to ignore class conflict. But denial and repression from official historiographers could not prevent the emergence of class histories, which frequently emerged in the surroundings of the organised labour movement. Labour activists made class a topic and mostly chose the nation state as framework for their class histories. Such a choice already indicates the desire on behalf of many socialists not to transcend the national storylines but to reframe them into stories which would be able to incorporate class. Eduard Bernstein's histories in Germany and Robert Grimm's in Switzerland are examples of such inclusive class histories<sup>90</sup>. Their class narratives were alternative national narratives including different visions of national identity rather than attempts to overcome national identity. In different European nation states, these efforts met with diverse levels of resistance from official historiography. The German historical profession was one of the most rigorous in attempting to prevent the emergence of class narratives well into the twentieth century. Gerhard Ritter's description of Eckart Kehr as *Edelbolschewist* and Hans Rothfels's successful attempt to prevent Gustav Mayer access to archival material are just two prominent examples of such

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<sup>90</sup> E. Bernstein, *Die Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt/Main, 1910); R. Grimm, *Geschichte der Schweiz in ihren Klassenkämpfen* (Bern, 1920).

attempts at exclusion. In Britain, by contrast, the narrative construction of 'the people' was often used to defuse the disruptive potential of class and to unify the national narrative. Writing national history under the framework of 'the people' allowed historians such as Trevelyan to merge class and nation and write an inclusive national narrative.

Class narratives were often centrally grouped around revolutions and revolutionary events. Revolutions were foundational moments for nations (France, 1789; Russia, 1917), but they were also moments in which class and nation came into conflict. Revolution was frequently an absent 'other' even in those national storylines that did not contain a successful revolution of their own. Some national stories, such as the British and the German ones, were pre-occupied with demonstrating that revolution was not necessary. Here revolution and class were depicted frequently as standing outside of the national tradition, as being alien and foreign imports with no roots in the indigenous national tradition. Narratives of revolution were invariably narratives of the extension of democratic rights and liberties. As such, they highlighted existing disunities and exclusion. Where they failed, questions surrounding lacking unity lingered. Where they succeeded, claims of re-found unity laid the foundation of revolutionary myths of origins, of nations reborn, rejuvenated and unified by the revolutionary experience. Yet everywhere we also find counter-revolutionary narratives which present a different picture of the revolution as dividing the nation and usurping and destroying national traditions. Hence, the republican French narratives viewed 1789 as source of unity and strength, whereas the Catholic French narratives lamented 1789 as the decline of traditional French values and norms. Even within the pro-revolutionary narratives, class variants could put a very different gloss on how the narrative was framed. As long as the Greek revolution was represented as a national rising against Turkish oppression, it was a story of national unity. Nevertheless, when Yanis Kordatos interpreted the revolution primarily as a social rather than a national rising directing against both Turkish and indigenous Greek oppressors of the people, class reframed the national history in important ways.

Not only class and ethnic narratives introduced disunity. Religion served as another major dividing line for national narratives. In the Habsburg empire, for example, Catholicism was widely identified with German pro-empire sentiments, whereas Protestantism in its Hussite (Czech), Calvinist (Magyar) and Lutheran (Slovak) versions was connected to the allegedly repressed nations within the empire. Confessional divides became markers of ethnic divisions. However, even within nation states, diverse confessional communities (Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Jews) shaped their own separate national narratives which underpinned distinct religious milieus. In Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands national narratives became pillarised according to different confessional denominations. In France, by contrast, the major dividing line was between the secular narratives and their Catholic alternatives. This was similar in countries which were confessionally homogeneous. In Lutheran Sweden and Catholic Spain, the dividing line also ran between secular and religious national narratives. In Cold War Italy, Catholic national historiographies could and did portray Catholicism as last bulwark against evil and atheist Communism. In Eastern Europe, religion could serve as an important marker of difference in border areas, for example, between Orthodox Russians, Uniate Ukrainians and Roman Catholic Poles<sup>91</sup>. Religion and nationalism could form strong alliances, but there were also considerable tensions. In some national narratives, particular confessions were externalised as 'foreign'. Hence, British nineteenth century narratives depicted Catholicism as a foreign, continental European and French influence which stood against the indigenous Protestant British empire<sup>92</sup>. Confessional aspects could, of course, only become important in national rivalries, where hostile nations claimed allegiance to different confessions. As the Ukraine and Russia were both Orthodox, and as Poland and Lithuania were both Catholic and as Germany, Estonia and Latvia were Protestant, national rivalries had to be linked to other than confessional differences.

Nationalism has often been perceived as a form of secular millenarianism in which politics was replacing religion as the key to salvation<sup>93</sup>. At the same time, religion sometimes became a powerful rival to the nation's claim for absolute loyalty. In many respects, nineteenth century empires such as the Ottoman empire found it easier than nation states to live with several separate religions co-existing with various degrees of autonomy. With the advances of secular education and the rise of the scientific state in the modern period, the principles of religion and nation could present stark choices, but equally there were many attempts to harmonise these principles and bring them together. Religion remained a

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<sup>91</sup> On the strong impact of religion on nationalising tendencies in central and eastern Europe, see J. Bahlke and A. Strohmeyer (eds), *Konfessionalisierung in Ostmitteleuropa. Wirkungen des religiösen Wandels im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert in Staat, Gesellschaft und Kultur* (Stuttgart 1999); H.-C. Maner and M. S. Wessel (eds), *Kirche und Staat, Religion und Gesellschaft in Ostmitteleuropa in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Stuttgart, 2002).

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, K. Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* (London, 1993).

<sup>93</sup> E. Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1993); H.-G. Haupt and D. Langewiesche (eds), *Nation und Religion in der deutschen Geschichte* (Frankfurt/Main, 2001).

shaper of people's destinies and identities, but the universal aspirations of all world religions often sat awkwardly with national ambitions. It was perhaps not by chance that in nineteenth century Italy, the neo-Guelphs failed to build the Italian nation state around the Papacy. It is certainly rare for a nation to define itself exclusively by religion. Unsurprisingly it was a Frenchman, Ernest Renan, in his classic attempt to define a nation, who argued that religion is not a sufficient basis for the establishment of modern nationality<sup>94</sup>. Yet religion undoubtedly belonged to one of the most powerful bonds within many national communities and those which aspire to become one.

## VI. THE NATIONALISATION OF CHRISTIANITY

Many of the nineteenth century national narratives were framed by liberals. Many of those liberals had only weak links with organised religion. Hence, national narratives appeared on the surface often as secular narratives. As liberals often were extremely sceptical of Catholicism, national narratives often took a particular anti-Catholic stance. In Italy, the unification of the nation had to be achieved against the existence of a separate Papal state. In Germany, many liberal nationalists perceived Catholicism as backward looking, hostile to progress and superstitious. In addition, it was regarded as a transnational religion, whose ultimate authority, the Pope, stood above the nation. As such, Catholicism constantly challenged the national narratives. The historian Renvall in Finland depicted Catholicism as foreign to Nordic thinking. Secular national histories on one level were about pushing religion out of the national storylines. Moreover, several European historiographies developed a sharp dividing line between church history, which dealt with organised religion, and national history, in which religion was relegated to the less important forces shaping national characters. Especially in monoconfessional countries, such as Norway, it was easy to regard religion as unimportant, as there was no tension between nation and religion.

If nineteenth century European liberals tended to be hostile to Catholicism, they often found it easier to accommodate their liberal values with Protestantism. Hence, many historiographies were characterised by a 'cultural Protestantism', in which religion mattered. Religious beliefs had a lasting influence on both French (Thierry, Guizot) and German (Ranke, Droysen, Sybel) nineteenth century historiography. Not infrequently, historians understood their own work as tracing and documenting God's actions in the past. Great personalities in history were presented as agents of a higher will. Many nineteenth century German historians had studied theology and had come from families of vicars and pastors. In their writings, religious discourses became nationalised and national discourses became sacralised. Religion served the nation, but also became a crucial element of understanding the nation. Nation became the new religion. The structure of national narratives often paralleled the structure of the New Testament. The suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus equalled the destruction, ruin and eventual resurrection of the nation. In Polish national narratives, Poland was referred to as 'Christ of nations'. And Hungarian national narrative also often referred to Hungary as the 'holy nation', in which comparisons with the passion of Christ were easily made.

In many nations, religion became a key ingredient of national self-understanding. Hence, Orthodoxy and Romanianness became virtually synonymous. The Swedish nation was constructed as a Lutheran bulwark against Russian (and by implication also Orthodox) expansion. Sweden had of course also defended European Protestantism against the Catholic counter-reformation in the Thirty Years' War. Denmark was often identified with a rather inward-looking Lutheranism in the nineteenth century. In Palacký's narration of the Czech nation fifteenth century, Hussitism was the central ingredient of Czech national identity. Religious figures often became national heroes: Jan Hus in the Czech lands, Martin Luther, in Germany, Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland. Kings, like St. Stephan and St. Wenzel, who had been declared saints by the Catholic Church, were equally important in the national pantheon. In Poland and Lithuania, the Catholic Church as an institution was constructed as having guaranteed the survival of the nation during prolonged periods of statelessness. Catholicism was crucial to the national narratives produced under Franco and Salazar. Both nations achieved national greatness only by fusing church and crown. Greek national narratives presented the Orthodox Church as a bridge to the classical heritage of Greece. 'Helleno-Christianity' became the cradle of European civilisation and culture and therefore established a superior position of the modern Greek states over all its rivals.

In Hungary, Protestant Hungarian nobles formed the backbone of national resistance against the Catholic Habsburgs. Narratives which came to regard Protestantism as central ingredient of national

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<sup>94</sup> E. Renan, 'What is a Nation?' [1882], reprinted in V. P. Pekora (ed.), *Nations and Identities* (Oxford 2001), 172 f.



identity often linked the Protestant religion to the evolution of the political nation. Constructions of British constitutionalism, Swiss republicanism and German constitutionalism all heavily depended on understandings of Protestantism. Catholic narratives were consciously excluded and frequently regarded as a monstrosity, although individual Catholics, such as Lord Acton in Britain and Franz Schnabel in Germany could become respected members of the historical professions. Yet most of their colleagues remained resolutely Protestant or at the very least ‘culturally Protestant’. In religiously mixed countries, such as Germany, Switzerland or indeed Slovakia, it tended to be the Protestant storylines which dominated the historical profession.

Arguably, religion played the greatest role in the construction of national narratives where national missions were defined in religious terms. Spanish and Portuguese national narratives stressed how both nations brought Catholicism to half the globe and how they drove the Muslims out of Europe. Poland, Russia, the Habsburg empire and Greece also presented their national histories in terms of shielding Christian Europe from the infidels. The battle of Mohacs against the Ottomans in 1526 was presented as national catastrophe for Hungary where the Hungarians sacrificed themselves for the sake of Christian Europe. The Greek struggle for independence was presented as a model for other Christian nations in the Balkans to establish their national narratives against the foremost Islamic power in Europe. The *Reconquista* in Spain was an epic of national recovery in which European triumphed over Arab culture. Islam was clearly one of the most important ‘others’ in European national histories, and it was particularly prominent in those national narratives where there had been contact with the Islamic world. That Muslims had contributed to European culture for centuries and there was indeed a Muslim Europe, one would not know from studying European national histories.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This exploratory article on the interrelationship between national master narratives and its principle ‘Others’ cannot do justice to the complexity of this topic in nineteenth and twentieth century national historiographies across Europe. However, the authors, who are presenting the preliminary results of three years of work on this theme, are hoping to have demonstrated three things in particular. Firstly, that the NHIST programme, as with all other historiographical projects in the ‘age of representation’, needs to reflect on its own categories, their genesis in time and their eventual disappearance. Moreover, historiography has to analyse their conceptual and political struggles and their conditions of existence (e.g. their regimes of historicity and of spatiality). In a world characterised by heterogeneity, by diversity and by power struggles – also in the domain of the representations of the past – the NHIST programme is trying to do this for the genre of national history. This also implied the reflection about the relationship between the practice of writing history and ideas of memory, historical time and historical identity. Secondly, that we have established that national history has been more successful than any other form of history writing contemporaneous with it to construct historical identities. We have argued that this success was primarily based on the intimate relationship between the nation state and ‘scientific’ national history, and its institutional and discursive power to suppress or to merge with and subsume rival master narratives, be they based on religion, class or ethnicity. Thirdly, we have identified that there remain lacunae in the research regarding national historiographies in Europe: especially the gendering the national histories is in need of further research. What we can say now with certainty is that national histories were heavily gendered, but it is difficult to make European-wide comparisons at present, as research on this important topic still remains patchy.

What also emerges very clearly from any comparison of national historiographies is the importance of histories of cultural transfer. Towering intellectual figures, e.g. Herder, Hegel, Mill, Marx and Lamprecht had a vast impact on almost all European countries and the ways in which national historians devised and structured their histories. However, there is also an equally important, but often neglected form of more limited regional transfer, where neighbouring countries, belonging to what Stefan Troebst has called ‘Geschichtsregionen’ (historical regions) have mutually influenced each other. By systematically exploring those cultural transfers, our team is hoping to gain additional vantage points on the comparison of master narratives in European national histories.

Most national histories relied on narrative construction of national progress using notions of ‘modernisation’ and identifying the nation state with the carrier of progress in history. They are stories of how a people liberated itself from political, economic and cultural backwardness and entered the realm of historical nations. These stories were differently inflected: sometimes they were stories about the forward march of liberalism, constitutionalism and democracy; sometimes they were stories of industrialisation and of cultural splendour. Invariably they were stories which told the rise of the nation from the depth of degeneration and decline through the wonders of modernity. Nevertheless, there were also authoritarian versions of national histories which combined dictatorship with national progress

through modernisation; fascist and Communist national histories were prime examples of such authoritarian versions of the modernisation paradigm.

Much of what we have discussed here only amounts to a hopefully tantalising glimpse onto the complex topic of the framing of national master narratives in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe. It is meant as an appetizer for a fuller and richer panorama provided by the forthcoming volume of NHIST Team 2 in the six-volume book series *Writing the Nation*, to be published by Palgrave MacMillan between 2007 and 2009.

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